

A Century of the USGS and the AAG: *The National Map*

When the AAG was founded in Philadelphia in 1904, nine of the forty-eight charter members of the association were geologists and topographers from the U.S. Geological Survey. From this beginning and the subsequent century-long partnership, both organizations have benefited, as well as the nation as a whole, as we have worked cordially and effectively together to advance the science of geography and its application for addressing vital issues in society and the natural world.

Established by Congress in 1879, the USGS also celebrates a significant anniversary in 2004. For 125 years our role in government concerning geography has been to produce a sound foundation of accurate, widely available geographic information for scholars, government officials, and the public. AAG members have in turn used this information to forward geographic thought, to promote geographic understanding, and to encourage the application of geographic research.

The idea of *The National Map*—the USGS vision for digitally-based topographic mapping in the 21st century—is a relatively recent response to a continuing, critical need of the nation. During the first 100 years of the USGS, the thousands of surveyors, photogrammetrists, cartogra-

phers, and others who labored for more than 33 million hours to complete the more than 55,000 USGS topographic maps covering the United States could not have foreseen the rapid acceleration of computer technology that has transformed the mapping profession today. Advances in digital cartography and geographic analysis, combined with coalescing technologies such as portable computers and the Internet, now offer dramatic possibilities for meeting the complex geospatial information demands of government, private industry, scientists, and the public.

The reliable and readily accessible geographic framework provided by *The National Map* makes it possible to pursue place-based analyses of diverse types of information, to monitor changes and detect trends, and to discover connections between otherwise seemingly independent phenomena and processes. Publicly available geographic information from *The*

National Map can be used for a multitude of purposes in science, business, and education, and in the delivery of government services. Enhanced and extended, geographic information from *The National Map* forms the basis for a wealth of commercial products.

To learn more about *The National Map*, I invite you to visit us at <http://nationalmap.usgs.gov/>. ■

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2004 NAS Geographical Sciences Committee

The National Academy of Sciences announced the membership for the 2004 Geographical Sciences Committee. Members include: Chair, Roger M. Downs, Pennsylvania State University; Brian J. L. Berry, University of Texas at Dallas; Susan L. Cutter, University of South Carolina; Ruth S. DeFries, University of Maryland; William E. Easterling, Pennsylvania State University; Patricia Gober, Arizona State University; Michael

F. Goodchild, University of California, Santa Barbara; Susan Hanson, Clark University; Jonathan D. Mayer, University of Washington; Emilio F. Moran, Indiana University; David Skole, Michigan State University; Ayse Can Talen, Fannie-Mae Foundation; and Anthony R. de Souza, BESR Director.

The Geographical Sciences Committee (GSC), formerly the Committee on Geography, is a standing committee under the

auspices of the National Academies/National Research Council (NRC) Board on Earth Sciences and Resources (BESR). The committee provides independent advice to society and to government at all levels on scientific, technical, and policy matters related to geography and geographic analysis. To learn more about the GSC visit <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/besr/Geography.html>. ■